Learner Journeys Research – Residential Support Scheme

March 2010

Of interest to staff and stakeholders with an interest in Learner Support
Further information

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LSC Learner Journeys Research – Residential Support Scheme

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Executive Summary

1.1 Background

This survey was commissioned to determine the impact of the financial assistance available to learners on participation, retention, achievement and progression. It’s main aim was to understand how well the funding provided by the LSC is helping learners with regard to the four stages of their learning, including finding out about the course and making the decision to take-up a course; actually taking up a course and staying on it to the end; completion of a course and achieving qualifications; and moving on to further learning.

Overall, 200 interviews (out of a total of 10,688 across all Learner Support schemes) were conducted amongst learners receiving Residential Support Scheme funding (RSS).

1.2 Engagement

The Residential Support Scheme has a degree of positive impact on engagement in learning. Half the learners (49%) who knew about the Scheme before deciding to do their original course may not have done the course if the funding had not been available.

Two-thirds of learners (68%) found it easy to find out about the Residential Support Scheme.

Learners funded through the Scheme have significant levels of concern about general living expenses, the cost of transport and course materials.

More than two-fifths of learners (42%) received general advice or guidance about financial support for learning. However, with more than half not receiving such advice or guidance there is still scope for wider access to advisory services.

1.3 Retention and persistence in learning

The retention rate for learners receiving Residential Support was estimated by the survey to be 91%. (The retention rate is the proportion of learners who complete their course whether they achieve the qualification or not.) An overall National Further Education retention rate of 87% (achieved in both 2005/06 and 2006/07) forms a reasonable benchmark for the Scheme’s retention rate.

The funding has a positive impact on retention. More than two-fifths of completers (43%) feel that they could not have finished their course without the funding. Half (49%) of those who are still on the course say that they would be at risk of dropping out without the funding.

The main reasons for early leaving is feeling that the course is not right for them, difficulties in getting to and from the course and changes in personal circumstances. However, financial issues are a significant factor and more than three-quarters (79%) of early leavers report that financial issues influenced their decision to leave their course.

Amongst those who left the course before completion, general living costs are the most frequent cause of financial problems whilst in learning.
1.4 Achievement

The success rate for learners supported by the Residential Support Scheme was estimated by the survey to be 87%. (The success rate is the number achieving the qualification as a percentage of those starting the course.). An overall National Further Education success rate of around 77% (based on rates of 76% in 2005/06 and of 77% in 2006/07) forms a reasonable benchmark for the Scheme figure.

Nearly all those completing their original course (96%) achieved a qualification. A large majority agrees that Residential Support Scheme funding helped them to achieve a qualification.

The proportion of learners with an NVQ equivalent qualification increased following their funded course. Furthermore, the proportion of learners having a Level 3 qualification or above is significantly greater after completing the course for which learners received Residential Support Scheme funding.

1.5 Learning progression

Half the learners (50%) who are no longer on their original course have progressed into, or registered for, further learning and, of these, most (87%) are learning at a higher level.

Of those who failed to complete their original learning and have not progressed, 50% said they would have considered more learning if more financial support had been available.

Nearly three-quarters of those who are either still on or have completed their further learning have received some financial assistance. Thus, around a quarter have continued learning without financial support.

Financial support received for further learning is most likely to have been other grants, including student loans and bursaries (i.e. other than Discretionary Hardship funding).

All of the learners who did receive further financial support for learning and achieved a qualification report that the financial support has helped them to achieve more qualifications.

All those achieving a qualification from their further learning achieved a Level 3 qualification for the first time.

1.6 Employment progression

The great majority (92%) of learners believe that the funding they received helped them progress in their work/career. Of these a high proportion (72% overall) feel it helped a great deal.

Following learning, learners are more likely to be in employment and much of this new employment is full-time. However, inactivity and unemployment have also increased slightly and this is at the expense of the proportion of learners that have remained in learning.

1.7 Personal and social benefits

The perceived benefits of undertaking learning supported by the Residential Support Scheme are wide-ranging and encompass a number of personal and social gains (including, for example, greater purpose in life, improved generic and social skills, increased interest in work and greater self-confidence).
1.8 Conclusions

The research provides evidence of the positive impact of RSS funding.

- RSS has a significant positive effect on engagement, retention, attainment and learning progression.

- Information on RSS funding was easily available to its recipients. (However, the survey was, of course, only of RSS recipients. We did not survey young people who are eligible for RSS but did not receive funding. However, further research has been commissioned by the LSC to explore the needs of more disadvantaged learners and non-learners and will cover issues around access to IAG amongst those not in learning.)

- The RSS retention rate is higher than the national FE rate and the RSS success rate significantly exceeds the national FE rate.

- In addition to learning benefits, virtually all RSS-funded participants achieve and acknowledge social or personal benefits which may lead to future progression and development.

Issues to consider in the further development of RSS funding

- There may have been some historic weakness in the scope of provision of information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and on the funding available to support take-up of those opportunities. For example, before their courses, little more than half of these learners had received general information, advice and guidance about the range of funding which might be available to them. Clearly there is scope for improvement in this area. Subsequently, though RSS clearly has positive impacts on retention, for a minority, there remains a need for continuing support and guidance if early leaving is to be reduced to a minimum. This may need to link RSS to other forms of financial support including discretionary funding which is able to respond to individual needs and circumstances.

- Subsequent to RSS-supported learning, around a quarter of learners are unemployed or inactive. These circumstances may reflect difficult economic circumstances (and the unemployment rate may not be greatly different from the average rate for the age group in England as a whole). However, these findings reinforce the importance of guidance, towards the end of courses, which identifies employment or further educational or training options and encourages learners to pursue them.
2 Background

2.1 Background

In February 2008, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) commissioned BMG Research to undertake a survey to determine the impact of the financial support schemes available to learners.

The main aim of the research is to understand how well the funding provided by the LSC is helping learners on their courses, with the focus on four key stages of learning comprising:

- Finding out about a course, including making the decision to take-up a course;
- Actually taking up a course and staying on it to the end;
- Completion of a course and achieving qualifications;
- Moving onto further learning; and the impact of funded learning on career and personal development.

More particularly, learners were asked a range of key questions relevant to each of the four key stages of learning and beyond:

- **Engagement/Participation:** Is the funding helping to raise interest in taking up learning? Is it encouraging people to take-up learning, who might not have not have been able to if the funding was not there to help them?
- **Retention:** Does the funding help learners to stay on a course until the end? Does it help prevent learners from dropping out, such as learners who might have had to stop learning to earn money if the funding was not there to support them?
- **Achievement:** Does the funding help learners complete their course and achieve a qualification, or achieve a higher qualification than they might have if the funding wasn’t there?
- **Progression:** Does the funding encourage learners to think about future courses, or has it encouraged them to try for a promotion, or take on more responsibility at work, or take-up other learning for personal development/interest?

The survey methodology, which involved a complex sample structure based on funding scheme and year of funding, was tailor-made to serve the aims of the survey and provide an appropriate level of detail with regard to the findings. As a result of the specific approach undertaken, findings from the survey cannot be compared with any other research or evaluation undertaken in the past.

2.2 Methodology

10,688 interviews were conducted with learners in several of the LSC’s financial support schemes (including Education Maintenance Allowance, Adult Learning Grant, and others) over three academic years.

A stratified random sample was drawn by funding scheme, the year in which funding was received, and the gender and age of learners. Where the sample was relatively small by year of funding, contacts were maximised. Where sufficient sample was provided to achieve minimum targets, quotas were set.
Within the overall total, 200 interviews were conducted amongst Residential Support Scheme recipients. [The Residential Support Scheme is for learners aged 16 or over who are 'ordinarily resident' in England. The course must be LSC-funded and outside a 'reasonable daily travelling distance' from home - and there cannot be similar courses available locally, it must usually be the learner's first level 2 or level 3 qualification and involve at least 15 hours' attendance a week, and be of at least 10 weeks' duration. More information about the scheme can be obtained via the following weblink: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/National/nat-rss-college-guide.pdf Interviews were undertaken by telephone with recipients living across England.]

The following table shows the number of contacts and number of interviews achieved by year of funding (for 2007/08, contacts up to May 2008):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of contacts</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved interviews</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of interviews</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note on figures: All percentages charted throughout this report are using data to one decimal place. However, data is presented as whole integers. Thus, rounding numbers which are added to or subtracted from each other may result in slight discrepancies. For example: 70% plus 27% equals 97% but the numbers used are actually, 69.8% (which rounds up to 70%) and 26.6% (which rounds up to 27%), which, when added together equal 96.4% (which rounds down to 96%). Furthermore, where there are two percentages presented side by side which look like they should be identical but the 'bars' are slightly different lengths the actual percentages differ by tenths of a percent. For example: 4% could be within the range 3.5% to 4.4%.

2.3 Sample profile

Just over three-fifths of the learners in receipt of the Residential Support Scheme (61%) were male. Just 2% were parents or carers of children.

Nearly three-quarters of recipients (72%) are currently aged between 16 and 18, with one in eight (12%) aged between 19 and 21 and a slightly higher proportion, in aggregate, aged over 21 (9% aged between 22 and 25 and 9% aged 26+).

The majority of respondents received funding in 2007/08 (43%). The remainder are distributed evenly between 2005/06 and 2006/07 (each 29%).

10% of Residential Support Scheme recipients represented an ethnic minority group. This compares with 23% across all funding schemes and 14% amongst 16-19 year olds, 16% of 20-24 year olds and 10% of 26+ year olds in England¹.

7% of respondents have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity. This compares with 10% across all funding schemes.

Most respondents (94%) are single, with a further 6% that are married/living with a partner, and 1% who are separated, divorced or widowed.

¹ Annual Population Survey
3 Engagement

Key findings
Survey statistics on engagement with the Residential Support Scheme (RSS) suggest that RSS has a positive effect in encouraging people to participate in learning. Firstly, the funding appears to exert reasonable leverage in that around half (49%) of learners might not have done the course if the funding hadn’t been available to them including, 1 in 4 who would certainly not have done so.

Information on RSS funding seems to be reasonably widely available. 47% of learners were aware of the funding before enrolment and two in three said they found it easy to find out about the funding.

There may be a little more concern that, whilst specific information making learners aware of RSS appears to have been reasonably accessible, only a little more than two-fifths of learners (42%) report that they received more general information or advice (mostly from Connexions, schools, and colleges) about the different types of funding available to support learning. There may be some under-reporting affecting this figure, because of elapsed time or because IAG was received but in a ‘light touch’ way which didn’t strongly register with learners. However, the figure, reflecting back on learners’ experiences over the last two or three years is, perhaps, simply consistent with government recognition that guidance services have not been delivered to the best possible standards in recent history and that reform was necessary. More reassuringly, whilst the proportion recalling that they received information and advice may be lower than desirable, virtually all those who did receive it found it to be helpful.

3.1 Impact of funding on course take-up
Half the learners (49%) who heard about the Residential Support Scheme before deciding on their course feel they probably or definitely would have not done the learning without it:
3.2 Reasons for taking up the course

Few learners give just one reason for taking up a course. When prompted with a list of possible reasons, the one most frequently selected is that of ‘to help you get a new/better job or improve your career prospects’ (95% of all learners). Only slightly fewer cite ‘for personal interest/enjoyment’ (rounds up to 95%), ‘to gain a qualification’ (94%), and/or ‘to gain new skills or improve your skills’ (also 94%). When respondents were asked to identify just one main reason, then ‘to gain a qualification’ was the reason most frequently given:
Wanting to gain new skills or improve their skills becomes a more frequent reason for participation as learners get older (26+ years). Although gaining a qualification remains the main reason for learning take-up overall, it is less likely to be cited as such by slightly older learners, those aged 20 or over. As might be expected, these differences suggest that the focus of learner participation moves away from qualifications and more towards general ability and employability with increasing age and maturity.

### 3.3 Financial concerns before starting the course

Given that these learners were registered with the Residential Support Scheme, it is to be expected that general subsistence costs would be a particular concern for learners contemplating taking a course and this was the case for more than four out of five learners. Nearly three-quarters were concerned about affording course materials, whilst nearly two-thirds were concerned about transport costs:
3.4 Information on funding

Just under half the learners (47%) found out about the Residential Support Scheme before starting the course.

The proportion is higher amongst younger learners (56% of 16 and 17 year olds). It is also higher amongst learners without a long term illness or disability (49%, compared with just 21% of those with such a condition). This suggests that information is targeted at school leavers but perhaps not widely promoted to those with special needs.

Just over half the learners (52%, 2% did not know) found out about the funding after deciding to do the course.

The majority of learners (68%) found it easy to find out about the funding. Only very small proportions found it fairly (13%) and or very difficult (3%). (15% replied that they found it neither easy nor difficult and 2% could not give an answer.)

3.5 Information, advice or guidance on funding

More than two-fifths of learners (42%) reported receiving information, advice or guidance (IAG) about the different types of funding available.

The most frequently reported source of IAG was a teacher/staff at college (58%).
One in eight learners (12%) reported a teacher or other staff at school as a source, whilst one in twelve (8%) reported Connexions as a source, rising to one in six 18 year olds (17%):

The information, advice and guidance received is highly rated, with 92% finding it useful (including 61% rating it as very useful).
Key findings

RSS has a positive effect on helping people to stay on their course. More than two in five (43%) of those who completed say they would not have completed without it; and a further 52% of those who completed say that they would have had to struggle without the support. Only 5% said that the funding had made no difference to them.

RSS is estimated to generate a retention rate of 91% for its supported learners. (The retention rate is the proportion of learners who complete their studies whether they are awarded the qualification or not.) The national retention rate for all students in Further Education was stable, at 87%, in both 2005/06 and 2006/07 (Book of FE Facts, dcsf, 2008). This latter statistic seems a reasonable benchmark against which to consider the 91% retention rate for RSS-supported learners. RSS appears to achieve a level of retention which is comparable with the national average rate for a group of learners who have underlying difficulties in financing their learning.

Furthermore, of the one in eleven (9%) who left early, only one in seven of these people spontaneously gave a financial reason for leaving their course early. However, on prompting, this proportion rose only to around four in five (79%). Even so, these statistics suggest that, at a maximum, RSS restricted early leaving where financial reasons were involved to only 6% of RSS-supported learners.

4.1 Value of funding to completing/staying on the course

Amongst both those who have completed their course and those who are still on it, the majority feel that the funding they have received from the Residential Support Scheme has been essential or important to seeing the course through. Findings on this question are summarised in the figure below:
4.2 Early leaving

The majority of those no longer on the course for which they received funding completed the course (91%). The remainder (9%) left their course early.

The main reasons for leaving the course before completion concern the course not being the right one for them, difficulties in getting to and from the course and changes in circumstances.

One in seven early leavers (14%) *spontaneously* stated that they could not afford to continue the course or that financial issues prevented them from continuing. However, when prompted, more than three-quarters of early leavers (79%) reported that money issues influenced their decision to a significant extent:
General living costs are reported as the cause of financial difficulties by both learners spontaneously citing financial concerns. One learner reported transport costs.

In terms of what might have helped them to complete their course, more individual guidance or support from the tutor and more financial support to cover the cost of course materials were most frequently and equally likely to be selected (each by 57% of early leavers). The next most frequently selected options were more time to study (43%), more financial support to cover the cost of transport (36%) and better quality of teaching (36%).

The figure below is based on all early leavers.
4.3 On-going or further financial assistance

A third of learners still on a course (33%) have received further financial assistance. This is most likely to be support to meet the cost of course materials (52% of those getting further financial assistance), whilst a third of learners (31%) needed it to fund transport. Nearly one in five learners (19%) received further financial assistance for course costs and fees and 13% received it to cover daily living expenses.
Key findings

In the eyes of learners, there was little ‘deadweight’ in RSS support. 97% said that it helped them to achieve a qualification (including 72% for whom it was ‘a great help’).

And achievement was significant. Overall, even including learners who left early, the proportion with Level 1 or no recognised qualifications fell from 24% to 14% and the proportion with ‘Level 2 and above qualifications’ rose from 77% to 87%.

RSS is estimated by the survey to generate a success rate of 87%. (The success rate is the number achieving their learning aim as a percentage of those starting the course.) The overall national success rate for all students in Further Education was 76% in 2005/06 and 77% in 2006/07 (Book of FE Facts, dcsf, 2008). These latter figures seem reasonable benchmarks against which to compare the 87% success rate for learners supported by RSS. It appears that RSS generates a success rate, for a group of students with underlying financial difficulties, which significantly exceeds the national rate.

5.1 Achievement of qualifications

Nearly all (96%) of learners who completed their course were able to achieve a qualification. (Of those achieving a qualification: 3% achieved at Level 1, 24% at Level 2, and 62% at Level 3. A further 12% received a qualification without an NVQ equivalence, that is, below Level 1.) The proportion of completers achieving a qualification is fairly constant over time (95% in 2007/08, 98% in 2006/07 and 96% in 2005/06).

Learners are overwhelmingly positive about the contribution that the funding made to their achievement of these qualifications. 72% feel the funding helped ‘a great deal’ and a further 25% consider that it helped ‘a fair amount’.

The proportion who feel that the funding helped a great deal/a fair amount is high even amongst those who would still have done the course without the funding (all of them) or for whom (in their view) the funding made no difference to the likelihood of completion (71%).

The qualifications which were achieved are set out in more detail in the following figure:
Figure 8: Qualifications achieved from the funded course (where achieved any qualifications) Base = 130

A comparison of the NVQ equivalence of learners’ qualifications before and after the original course for which they received funding shows a significant increase in qualification levels. The proportion without a qualification with any NVQ equivalence fell from 9% to 5%. The decline in the proportions of learners with level 1 and 2 qualifications is due to the significant increase in the proportion of learners with Level 3+ equivalent qualifications (from 17% to 51):
Figure 9: NVQ equivalence before and after original course for which received funding (all respondents) Base: 200
### Key findings
There is evidence that participation in RSS-supported learning encourages progression to further learning beyond the original course:

- 46% of learners have taken up further learning and 4% are registered for a further course.
- 70% of those who have completed further learning got a qualification from that learning.

### 6.1 Learning progression
46% of those no longer on the original course for which they received Residential Support Scheme funding report that they have taken up other learning since leaving the original course.

A further 4% of learners no longer on their original course have registered for further learning but not yet begun it.

Thus, half the learners no longer on the original course (50%) have taken up or registered for further learning.

### 6.2 Level of further learning
The great majority (87%) of the 50% of learners who have taken up or registered for further learning, undertake learning at a higher level than their funded course. The proportion is significantly higher amongst those who completed their original course than amongst those who left their course early (90%, compared with 63%) and it is slightly higher than average amongst those that achieved a qualification, as shown in the following figure:
6.3 Funding of further learning

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of those that have taken up further learning have received further financial assistance. This is most likely to have involved other grants such as student loans or bursaries:

Table 1: Schemes from which learners have received funding for further learning (where received further financial assistance)  Base = 48  *Base = 65 (where taken up further learning and still on it/completed it)

| Received funding for further learning* | 74% |
| Did not receive funding for further learning* | 26% |
| Other grants for learners including student loans/bursaries | 73% |
| Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) | 19% |
| Residential bursary or grant | 10% |
| Residential Support Scheme | 6% |
| Discretionary funds – for transport, books and learning materials | 6% |

2 Not Discretionary Hardship funding
Nearly one in five learners (19%) who have received funding for further learning has also received other financial assistance, in addition to that from one of the schemes in the previous table.

Where further financial assistance (from any source) has been received, it has most likely been for course materials (56%), with a third (33%) receiving further assistance for course costs/fees and just one respondent receiving assistance for daily living expenses.

More than two-fifths (43%) of those who have completed a further course of learning and received funding to support that further study feel they could not have completed the course without that funding. More than a quarter (29%) feel they could have completed the course but would have struggled financially.

A higher proportion still on a course and receiving funding (66%) feel they would not still be on the course without it. Most of the remainder feel they would still be on the course without the funding but would struggle financially (24%).

6.4 Impact of the Residential Support Scheme on learning progression

Funding through the Residential Support Scheme has a strong influence on progression into further learning. The majority of learners (87%) feel that the funding has helped them move on to further learning. This includes 52% who feel the funding helped them a great deal:

Of those not yet registered for a future new course, 27% definitely intend to go on to a further course, and a further 15% will probably do so.

6.5 Achievement from further learning

Nearly all learners still in further learning (98%) report that they are aiming to achieve qualifications from this further learning.
More than two-thirds of learners (70%) who have completed a further course have achieved a qualification from it.

As a result of qualifications achieved from their further course, the proportion of these learners (that is, those who have gone on to further learning and achieved a qualification from it) who are now qualified at level 3 or above has increased from 29% to 71%:

Figure 12: NVQ equivalence before and after further learning (where achieved a qualification on further course) Base = 7 Caution: small sample base

All learners who achieved a qualification from their further learning and received funding whilst on the course believed that the funding helped them a great deal to gain the qualification.

6.6 Take-up of further learning by early leavers

Half (50%) of those who dropped out early from their original course because of financial issues and who have not taken up or registered for another course, said that they would probably or definitely have considered doing more learning had more financial support been available. This suggests that lack of financial support (or knowledge of its being available) has had some negative impact on the extent to which these learners were able to progress into further learning. Please note that these findings should be treated with caution as they are based on a small base of four learners.
Figure 14: Impact of further financial support on take-up of further learning (where left original course early for financial reasons and have not taken up further learning) Base = 4 Caution: small sample base

- Definitely would have considered further learning: 25%
- Probably would have considered further learning: 25%
- Might or might not: 25%
- Probably not considered it: 25%
7 Employment Progression

Key findings

RSS is largely a programme which assists people to move, via further learning and qualifications, into employment. Thus, the employment rate of participants rose from 18% before the RSS learning to 40% afterwards. Concomitantly the proportion in pre- and post-education fell from 80% to 50%.

More negatively, 11% of participants are unemployed (8%) or inactive (3%). However, the unemployment rate is broadly comparable with the 14% national rate for 16-24 year olds (mid-2008, Annual Population Survey) and may, in part at least, reflect the growing economic difficulties at the time at which the survey was undertaken.

7.1 Extent to which funded learning helped career progression

Learners who completed a funded course are very positive about the contribution that the funding has made to progress in their career. Overall, 92% of these learners feel it has helped them at least ‘a fair amount’, including 72% who feel it has helped ‘a great deal’.

The proportion who feel that the funding has helped ‘a great deal’ to progress their career, either now or in the longer term, is particularly high amongst those who received funding in 2005/06 (77%), reflecting the fact that career progress is likely to become more evident over time.

7.2 Employment status: before and after the original course

The following figure compares the working status of learners before and after the original course for which they received funding:
There has been an increase in the proportion of learners now in employment. Two-thirds of this increase is accounted for by the proportion now in full-time work. This is offset to some extent by the increase in the proportion of recipients who are registered unemployed or economically inactive.

Two-thirds of all those in full or part-time employment after the course (65%) are in a permanent job. This represents an increase in the proportion of learners with a permanent job prior to the original course (46%).

### 7.3 Financial benefits

Around two-fifths of learners (43%) report that their annual personal income has increased since they started their original course.

85% of learners who were in employment both before and after the learning and who report an increase in their personal income were able and willing to provide an estimate of the size of the increase. The average (mean) increase in income amongst those in employment both pre- and post- learning is around £8,100 per annum.
Figure 16: Approximate increase in annual personal income (where in work before and after learning, report that their annual personal income has increased and provided a response) Base = 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to £500</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>£501 - £1,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>£1,001 - £2,000</td>
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</tr>
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<td>£10,001 - £20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>£20,001 - £30,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean increase in personal annual income (based on 35 responses) = £8,107

7.4 Career progression

The majority of learners (88%) who are now in work following completion of a funded course feel their career benefited in at least one way. These benefits are summarised in the figure below:
Figure 17: Career benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (where completed any funded course and in work)  Base = 87

- Moved to a job with more responsibilities or prospects: 64%
- Moved into a job with better pay: 62%
- Obtained more responsibilities or prospects in an existing job: 52%
- Found a permanent job for the first time: 38%
- Moved back into work after being out of work: 35%
- Obtained better pay in existing job: 32%
- Experienced any other career benefits: 8%
- None of these: 12%
The majority of learners selected every item in a list of possible benefits which resulted from undertaking the course for which they received funding. This shows that benefits of learning are wide-ranging and widely perceived. As can be seen in the figure below, 99% of learners recognised at least one benefit from their learning. Only one learner said he/she gained none of the benefits in the figure:

Figure 18: Benefits experienced, prompted, multiple response (all respondents) Base = 200

Learners who failed to complete their original course are less likely to report some of these benefits. However, the majority of those who did not achieve a qualification feel that they have made improvements all the areas.

Whatever impacts the Residential Support Scheme has on achievement of qualifications (significant), and on employment progression (more modest), it is quite clear that participation significantly improved learners' morale and sense of direction, which may then have a positive impact upon their future employment prospects.
Key indicators based on Residential Support Scheme survey responses are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely/probably would not have done course without the Residential</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about having enough money whilst on the course</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to access information on the Residential Support Scheme</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received IAG on funding available</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where received, IAG was helpful</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retention</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion who completed (Benchmark for all in FE in England = 87%)</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding important or essential to completion</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding important or very important to achievement of a qualification</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of starters who achieved a qualification (Benchmark for all in</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE in England = 77%)</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progression</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion who had undertaken further learning or have registered to do so</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those who have undertaken further learning who have</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>received financial assistance to support that learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those in employment following the Residential Support Scheme</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)</td>
<td>(+22% points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those in learning following the Residential Support Scheme</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)</td>
<td>(-30% points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of those unemployed or inactive following the Residential</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Scheme funded learning (change from pre-learning in brackets)</td>
<td>(+7% points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion reporting a positive personal or social (‘soft’) benefit from</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Residential Support Scheme funded learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on these indicators, the research provides evidence of the positive impact of RSS funding.

- RSS has a significant positive effect on engagement, retention, attainment and learning progression.

- Information on RSS funding was easily available to its recipients. (However, the survey was, of course, only of RSS recipients. We did not survey young people who are eligible for RSS but did not receive funding. However, further research has been commissioned by the LSC to explore the needs of more disadvantaged learners and non-learners and will cover issues around access to IAG amongst those not in learning.)

- The RSS retention is slightly above the national FE rate and the RSS success significantly exceeds the national FE rate.

- In addition to learning benefits, virtually all RSS-funded participants achieve and acknowledge social or personal benefits which may lead to future progression and development.

**Issues to consider in the further development of RSS funding**

- There may have been some historic weakness in the scope of provision of information, advice, and guidance on learning opportunities and on the funding available to support take-up of those opportunities. For example, before their courses, little more than half of these learners had received general information, advice and guidance about the range of funding which might be available to them. Clearly there is scope for improvement in this area. Subsequently, though RSS clearly has positive impacts on retention, for a minority, there remains a need for continuing support and guidance if early leaving is to be reduced to a minimum. This may need to link RSS to other forms of financial support including discretionary funding which is able to respond to individual needs and circumstances.

- Subsequent to RSS-supported learning, around a quarter of learners are unemployed or inactive. These circumstances may reflect difficult economic circumstances (and the unemployment rate may not be greatly different from the average rate for the age group in England as a whole). However, these findings reinforce the importance of guidance, towards the end of courses, which identifies employment or further educational or training options and encourages learners to pursue them.
10 Appendix

10.1 Sample error

As with all quantitative research, the sample size is subject to a level of statistical reliability at various levels.

To give an indication, a finding of 50% on a base size of 200 interviews has a confidence interval of +/-6.9% at the 95% level. That is to say that if the survey returns a finding of 50% for a particular question there is a 95% probability that the “true” figure (amongst all those learners in the population, not just those interviewed) will lie within +/-6.9% (i.e. between 43% and 57%) of that finding.

When looking at sub-groups within a sample this confidence interval increases. So for example, when looking at a sub group like those that registered for a course in 2006/07 (with a base size of 57 interviews in this study) statistical confidence is reduced further still (to around +/-13% in this case, ignoring the small population correction).

To give an indication of the effect of sample size on statistical reliability:

- A sample size of 100 would have a confidence interval of +/-9.8%
- A sample size of 500 would have a confidence interval of +/-4.4%
- A sample size of 1,000 would have a confidence interval of +/-3.1%

Note that where a small population (relative to sample size) is sampled, as in the case of the present study (where around a quarter of all eligible learners were interviewed) statistical reliability is increased. Given this, and the relatively limited availability of sample, a larger sample size for the population surveyed for this project would be impractical and unnecessary but should be considered if the scope of the survey were to be increased.